

FROM THE PRESIDENT

'NEWS OF THE DAY'
by Richard Harding

It has been a very busy fall in the field of family mediation. The family Mediation Conference in Victoria was a great success. It was my first time sitting as your representative on the Board of Family Mediation Canada. With 20 members on the Board and the Executive present it is a very large Board and it only has one full Board meeting a year in conjunction with the Annual FMC Conference.

The most important piece of business before the Board was what to do with certification and standards for family mediators. Those of you who were at the last AFMS AGM will recall we had a thorough discussion of the proposed certification and standards. Needless to say the proposals were unworkable in Alberta, requiring training that does not exist here, supervision that is not necessarily available, and practicum experience which is not available. It was a model driven academically, not by the market. The market for mediators' services in Alberta does not make it economic for our members to invest so extensively in training.

Because of the solid feedback your Board received at the AGM I was able to advocate very strongly on behalf of Alberta at Family Mediation Canada. Although there were some other voices of concern, Alberta's voice was clearly the loudest in stopping the headlong charge into setting standards which, though laudable in the ideal, would be unworkable in practice.

There was great concern that FMC "occupy the field" and be moving

forward in the areas of standards and certification. Grants could be obtained from the Government to facilitate the process of developing standards if the Board voted to move forward. A mediated solution was reached during a dinner break between myself and Peggy English, who has pioneered the standards project. The Family Mediation Canada Board voted to proceed to implement standards and certification but only to do so commensurate with there being opportunities for training, supervision and experience available to its members to enable them to obtain those standards.

At the FMC Annual General Meeting, Linda Long, one of your Board Members, moved a motion from the floor that no certification and standards would be imposed without those standards being put to the membership at an Annual General Meeting. This was passed.

Family Mediation Canada has adopted the policy that it will not itself get involved in performing training. It is my intention to continue to lobby on behalf of the AFMS membership to have FMC assist in the development of the market for mediation so that the opportunities for experience and supervision are there for our membership to meet any suggested national standards.

CON'T.....

Inside

- 1 **Premediation Interviews...**
- 2 **Upcoming Events...**
- 3 **Expert Corner...**
- 4 **Book Review...**
- 5 **Abused Women in Mediation**

Back in Alberta, we have heard definite rumblings coming from the Department of Justice and Alberta Family and Social Services about the possibility of restructuring the Custody Mediation Projects and the possibility of their being privatized. We have let the government know that we have a body of trained, qualified, insured mediators available to operate in a privatized market and that we have knowledge and expertise in the area and would very much like to work with them. So far they have not taken us up on our offer of help.

Your Board is very concerned and will continue to try to influence the shape of what comes. A survey of our membership done a few years ago showed it to be almost equally operating in the private and public sector. As such we have not advocated for one or the other but hope to promote a sensible model of delivery that is sensitive to the appropriate use of mediation.

Parent Education is also at the forefront. Family Mediation Canada has obtained a grant to compile an inventory of programs and resources operating in Canada. Madam Justice Trussler is heading a compulsory divorce education program for litigants in Edmonton.

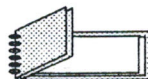
Family Mediation Canada now has a larger membership than the Association of Family and Conciliation Courts. Given that we only draw from Canada, not the whole of North America, this means that your organization is developing a significant presence on the shape of mediation to come.

Please note the upcoming AGM in Red Deer. It looks like we'll have a great panel and I hope

to see you all there.

Richard Harding is the current President of AFMS.

BOOK REVIEW



THE PROMISE OF MEDIATION

(Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 1994, \$46.89 from the Network)

The authors, Bush and Folger, look at mediation as a movement that has evolved in four different accounts or stories.

The Satisfaction Story is a well known account of its many resulting benefits for individuals, such as reduced emotional and financial costs, mutuality, consensuality, flexibility and the win-win ideal. Both the AFMS and AAMS use these descriptions in their brochures.

The Social Justice Story talks about the mediations benefits in terms of strengthening societal groups such as consumers and environmental groups as well as communities. This Story seems to support the Community Mediation Calgary, the BBB. Dispute Settlement Centre and even the newly formed City of Calgary Police Cultural Resources Unit with its Diversity Specialists (Mediators).

As a contrast, the Oppression Story is dead against Mediation. It denies all the stated benefits. It only sees abuses in the forms of the manipulation in bargaining and the further exploitation and oppression of the weak. Proponents of this Story are some feminist critics and some "writers and thinkers concerned with

equality".

The authors focus their book on the Transformation Story and its two themes: Empowerment (self-respect, reliance and confidence) and Recognition (non-judgementality and mutuality). They see the collective mediation's benefits in terms of self-actualization (Maslow, 1971).

They appear to be on a crusade to push their story to the front by criticizing the others. Their repetitiveness is irritable. The absence of direct, supporting research quotes (Haynes; p.98) is frustrating.

Let us agree that the mediation is a movement with a diversity of expectations and a plurality of practices. Therefore, the number of overlapping stories will increase, (Mediation, Arbitration?) That's a promise!!

Harry Zuurbier is the current Treasurer for AFMS.

ATTENTION!

Dr. John Haynes has offered to send you a copy of his book "The Fundamentals of Family Mediation" (1994) for \$15.00 US Funds (must be money order or US funds, not Canadian cheque with 'US funds'). This includes all mailing costs. If you wish the book to be signed, please make sure your name is legible for his signature in the book. You may contact Dr. Haynes at the following:

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